We claim:

1.   1.   A method of format detection for information having an information rate and
2.   received over a communication channel of a communication system, the method
3.   comprising the step of:
4.   determining the format of the received information from the information rate
5.   and a measurement of a time period during which the information was received at a
6.   power level that is equal to or above a defined threshold whereby the time period is
7.   measured by detecting transitions in the power level of symbols carrying the
8.   information.

1.   2.   The method of claim 1 where the time period is measured from a sliding window
2.   and a ratio of measured average power values for the sliding window.

1.   3.   The method of claim 1 where the communication channel is a guiding channel and
2.   the received information is extracted from the guiding channel.

1.   4.   The method of claim 3 further comprising the step of providing a lookup table
2.   containing a list of M information size values for the guiding channel and lists of M
3.   information size values for each of other channels where M is an integer.

1.   5.   The method of claim 4 where the communication system is a 3GPP compliant
2.   UTMS communication system.

1   6. The method of claim 4 where the step of determining the format of the received

2   information comprises the steps of:

3   calculating an estimated information size value for information extracted from

4   the guiding channel by multiplying the information rate to the measured time period;

5   selecting at least one information size value candidate from the list of M

6   information size values for the guiding channel based on the calculated estimated

7   information size value; and

8   applying the selected candidates to an algorithm for determining an actual

9   information size value of the information extracted from the guiding channel when the

10   estimated information size value is not equal to any of the M information size values in

11   the list for the guiding channel.

1   7.   The method of claim 6 where the step of calculating an estimated information

2   size value further comprises the step of rounding off the calculated information size

3   value to a nearest integer value.

1   8. The method of claim 6 where the format of the extracted information is determined

2   from the calculated estimate information size value when that value is equal to one of

3   the M information size values in the list for the guiding channel.

1   9.   The method of claim 6 where the step of applying the selected candidates to an

2   algorithm for determining an actual information size value comprises the step of:

3   performing an error correcting decode operation on the extracted information

4   that yields a result on which a tail bit test and an error detecting decode operation are

5   performed.